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PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK  
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FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0015  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000790

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/04/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQI VP HASHIMI ON CABINET CHANGES, BSP, AND  
DISCUSSIONS WITH IRAQIYAH

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad per 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In a meeting with the Ambassador on February 28, VP Tariq al-Hashimi said he had met with the Prime Minister on February 27. The VP professed his support to the PM and asked the PM to view him as a contributor to the GOI's policies. According to VP Hashimi, he and PM discussed cabinet changes, with the VP relaying his desire to change MOD Abdul Qader al-Mufriji as soon as possible. The PM also wanted to replace DPM Salam Zawbai and reported that the PM was open to making this change. The Ambassador and Hashimi discussed government performance in the Baghdad Security Plan (BSP), the PM's call to dismiss the director of the Sunni Endowment, de-Ba'athification, the neighbors conference in March, and Tawafuq's discussions with Iraqiya leader Ayad Allawi. END SUMMARY.

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VP's Meeting With the PM  
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¶2. (C) VP Hashimi said he met with the PM on February 27. Hashimi said he told the PM that he and his Sunni colleagues are ready to help and support him, but they want to be consulted on issues. Hashimi reported that he and the PM discussed cabinet changes. Hashimi said Tawafuq and others want MOD Abdul Qader al-Mufriji replaced because the security situation has deteriorated under his tenure and he is not bringing in professional people. Hashimi complained that when he calls Abdul Qader to discuss a security incident, the MOD does not even know about it. Hashimi said the MOD thinks Hashimi is concerned that the Ministry of Defense is not employing enough Sunnis, but Hashimi clarified that his real issue with Abdul Qader is that he is not hiring professional employees - Sunni or Shia.

¶3. (C) Hashimi said the Sunni community and some Arab countries are not satisfied with DPM Zawbai's performance and want him replaced. Hashimi said the PM was open to that, although PM Adviser Sami al-Askari thought they should wait to replace Zawbai because he was leading the services committee in the BSP. Hashimi, however, thought they could proceed because the BSP committee was a separate duty from the DPM job. When asked if CoR Speaker Mahmoud Mashhadani were going to be replaced, Hashimi replied, "One thing at a time." Hashimi said Tawafuq would give the PM a list of possible replacement candidates but noted the final choices would be a compromise between Tawafaq and the PM.

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Government Performance in the BSP  
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¶4. (C) The Ambassador told the VP he had recently discussed with the PM the importance of evenhandedness in the BSP operations. As an example of the PM's fairness, the Ambassador noted that the Iraqi Security Forces, with the approval of the PM, arrested an MOI official suspected of

multiple abuses of detainees, including detainees who were at the MOI Site 4, a high profile case of detainee abuse uncovered in May 2006. Hashimi said he was concerned about human rights and said he was hearing stories of people being taken from their houses and detained, without their families knowing what happened to them. The Ambassador said the Executive Steering Committee had formed a subcommittee, with the Human Rights Minister, to make rules and regulations about judges, arrest warrants, and other human rights-related issues.

15. (C) Hashimi said the Sunni community welcomed more Coalition troops. He said displaced Sunnis are not returning to their homes yet. He stated that two Sunni families tried to return to Hurriyah but were attacked. The Ambassador encouraged Hashimi to consult with the Coalition forces and said he would work on setting up a Coalition liaison to the VP's office.

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Dismissal of Sunni Endowment Director Unresolved  
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16. (C) Hashimi and the Ambassador agreed that the PM's call to fire Sunni Endowment head Ahmed Abdul Ghafour al-Samarraie was an emotional one. The Ambassador relayed that President Talabani advised the PM not to dismiss Samarraie, but Maliki did it anyway. The Ambassador said that according to Talabani, the PM is now admitting his public call for the dismissal was a hasty decision, but he is asking for Talabani to help him save face in front of the public. Hashimi said Samarraie could be replaced at some point, but not now, because he did not want the replacement to look as though it were coming at Maliki's request.

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Presidency Council to Work on De-Ba'athification Law  
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17. (C) Hashimi said he had looked at the Embassy's proposed draft for the new de-Ba'athification law and had only made one slight amendment before sending it to Salim al-Jabbouri, the Iraqi Islamic Party's point person on the De-Ba'athification law. The Ambassador asked Hashimi to work out a compromise draft with VP Abdel Mahdi in the next week, so that the Presidency Council could take the lead on the law and present a draft to the CoR. Hashimi agreed on this.

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Neighbors' Conference  
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18. (C) Turning to regional affairs, Hashimi said he was going to Syria on March 5. The Ambassador said a neighbors' conference is going to be held in Baghdad on March 10. The conference will include sub-ministerial level representation from Iraq's neighbors, Egypt, and the permanent five members of the UN Security Council. The Ambassador explained a second conference will take place in April at the ministerial level, and will include representatives from the Group of Eight in addition to the countries represented at the March conference. The Ambassador said the venue for the April conference is still being discussed but noted Istanbul and Cairo are being considered.

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Tawafuq Discussions with Iraqiya  
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19. (C) Hashimi said Tawafuq is having good discussions with Iraqiya leader Ayad Allawi. He said Tawafuq, Iraqiya, Hewan, the Turkomen Front, and Fadhila are considering forming a bloc to promote national unity, but noted there have been no deals yet. Hashimi was unsure whether Fadhila

would be willing to break from Itilaf, although he said many Fadhila members tell him they are independent. Hashimi said that Tawafuq realizes it needs to reach out to other parties since it has only 44 members, and anyone who joins with Tawafuq is a bonus.

KHALILZAD